

**EDUCATING A CHANGELING: THE PARADOX OF LIBRARY AND
INFORMATION SCIENCE (LIS) EDUCATION IN AFRICA**

INAUGURAL LECTURE

by

Prof MABEL K MINISHI-MAJANJA

of the

Department of Information Science, University of South Africa

21 November 2012

1. INTRODUCTION

I have titled this lecture “educating a changeling: the paradox of Library and Information Science (LIS) education in Africa.” Let me start by explaining the analogy of the changeling - a **changeling** is a mythical creature found in Western European folklore and folk religion. I suspect that this concept can also be found even in our African folklore. A changeling is typically described as being the offspring of a fairy, troll, elf or other legendary creature who has been secretly left in the place of a human child.” This is done for the survival of their kind. The changeling looks, for all intents and purposes as the human child, even though the latter will have been secretly taken away - and the human mother not realizing that an exchange has taken place, continues to nurse and nurture the foreign thing, mistaking it for her own. In folklore, the changelings are put in place of the child so as to feed off of the mother of the child. The kidnapped child then becomes food for the changeling's mother. Once the changeling's mother and the changeling have drained the life from the human mother and child, the changeling and its mother begin to search for a new suitable food source. However, it is said that some changelings forget that they are not human and proceed to live a human life. Other changelings who do not forget, however, may later return to their fairy family, possibly leaving the human family without warning and without a replacement or return of their own “taken” child.

In a very rudimentary way, I wish to posit that librarianship is a changeling¹ in Africa and therefore the education and training we offer, often has gaps because

¹ According to Wikipedia (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/changeling>), “a **changeling** is a mythical creature found in Western European folklore and folk religion. It is typically described as being the offspring of a fairy, troll, elf or other legendary creature that has been secretly left in the place of a human child.” This is done for the survival of their kind. In folklore, the changelings are put in place of the child so as to feed off of the mother of the child. The kidnapped child then becomes food for the changeling's mother. Once the changeling mother and the changeling have drained the life from the human mother and child, the changeling and its mother begin to search for a new suitable food source. Some changelings might forget they are not human and proceed to live a human life. Changelings which do not forget, however,

of the foreign nature of the profession. I suggest that library science is a changeling because of the fact that the African indigenous knowledge systems were discarded by colonialism, and replaced by predominantly western knowledge and information systems. Let me hasten to admit that I am aware of the Timbuktu collections (but these go back only to the 13th century A.D.) and the fact that the history of “modern” librarianship starts with the ancient library of Alexandria (Egypt) in the 3rd century B.C. with its *Pinakes* (the earliest known catalog by Callimachus) and one also acknowledges the contributions of people like Ranganathan in the development of library classification systems. But in spite of such roots and contributions, library science has developed along the lines of western thinking and societal norms. And so, without delving too deep into the philosophical viewpoint, my thesis is that when providing education and training for librarians in Africa, we attempt to produce a person who is somewhat an alien – a sort of a changeling. This changeling however, is one of those who has forgotten that he is one and/or has elected to stay with the humans/Africans and has been accepted fully as part of life in Africa. My thesis deviates from the folklore, by suggesting that the mother, Africa, is fully conscious and accepting of the changeling, electing to put it to full functionality as a member who belongs. I therefore take up the discussion cognizant of the fact that we know and accept libraries and librarians without belabouring their “foreignness” so much so that when moments of disjuncture appear, we hardly remember that the nature of the profession creates and leaves gaps.

A study or discussion of LIS education is incomplete if it is not underpinned by the libraries and societies which they serve. Ramesha and Babu (2007) explain

may later return to their fairy family, possibly leaving the human family without warning and without a replacement or return of their own “taken” child.

that libraries are social organs with social obligations and that these obligations vary with cultural and educational needs of the society. It is for this reason that settler colonialists imported libraries into Africa, not only for them to continue their valued way of life but also as a way of perpetuating their culture. Likewise, it should not be surprising that in recent political landscapes, libraries should be seen as vehicles of social justice and democratisation which should be used as tools for addressing, if not redressing social inequalities. The whole notion of libraries as social organs stems from the value of information and knowledge whose power is harnessed by organizations and governments for the achievement of goals. Thus librarians and the information they handle are significant towards achievement of political, social, economic and other goals as well as important vehicles for the achievement of fundamental human rights. Currently, with notions of globalisation and the changing world order, we need to regularly pause and examine the future of libraries before we can determine the kind of education and training of professionals who work in them.

2. FUTURE LIBRARIES IN AFRICA

The nature and future libraries underpin LIS education and training in Africa, as elsewhere in the world. Libraries, as we know them today came to Africa with colonialism, as the colonizers sought to either perpetuate their culture or demolish the cultures of the colonised. Thus in some cases, the early libraries in sub-Saharan Africa were exclusive to the colonial families, containing books and other materials whose content suited them and their cultural heritage. In other cases, especially in the case of education libraries, libraries were said to open the world to the natives, who otherwise, lived in places, other than “the world”. As a colonial tool, libraries have tended to subjugate the indigenous knowledge systems, touting the western systems as the standard. Throughout

the better part of the second half of the 20th century, library discussions focused on the belief that if libraries, institutions, and associations from the global North simply "adopted" African libraries and assisted in the flow of information and resources from North to South, the problem of stunted library development and information poverty could be alleviated (Lor & Britz, 2005). However, Sturges and Neill (1998) observe that a vocal and strong group of dissenting voices including such African library pioneers as Amadi, Mchombu, Aboyade, Alemna, and Ndiaye) emerged in the 21st century. Mchombu (1982) made a revolutionary call for a "Librarianship of Poverty" and Peter Lor's paper entitled *Africanisation of South African Libraries: a Response to Some Recent Literature* set the pace for this reversal of thinking. The principles advanced by Lor (1993) included among others: the commitment of librarians to the values of the communities they serve; equal service ethos towards all library users irrespective of levels of literacy; and an acceptance that community information resources have a higher claim on funding than sophisticated information services. Other library and information scholars, such as Kay Raseroka (2006), Janneke Mostert (1998), and Jabulani Sithole (2007) have written about efforts on the continent that reflect a new paradigm of African information work – one which reflects cultural rights (e.g. African languages, oral tradition, indigenous knowledge) as well as the concomitant right of people to enjoy the arts and share in scientific advancement and its benefits.

In thinking about the future libraries in Africa, one is tempted to continue fashioning them on their western counterparts. But considering the intermingling of human destinies, it is imperative that the libraries in Africa have other underlying mandates above/besides the western view. These mandates are built around the developmental imperative. As a continent that has “lagged” behind in development, (however one defines or conceptualises

development), we must always never lose sight of the need to take each and every opportunity to contribute towards the social development of our populations. In 2007, Africa division of the International Federation of Library Associations (IFLA-Africa) held a meeting that reiterated the need for libraries to focus on issues such as poverty eradication, health, education and the Millennium Development goals (INASP, 2008). This emphasises the fact that current and future libraries in Africa must include other mandates in addition to those ascribed to by libraries in developed countries. Some of the important extra mandates include libraries to support development, services to multicultural diversity and libraries for global citizenship.

2.1 Firstly, *Libraries for development* is a broad area that includes aspects such as libraries for poverty eradication; libraries for improved health; libraries for effective education (ignorance has been variously touted as the disease in Africa) and libraries for global human rights, etc. If we look at the latter, librarians and information workers in both industrialized and less-industrialized nations should see new opportunities for increasing the significance of information work in the achievement of fundamental human rights as enshrined in Article 27 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR)². One such set of human rights pertinent in Africa are cultural rights. Donders (2007) defines cultural rights as “all those rights that protect components of cultural identity and the dignity of individuals and communities.” Libraries and information should play a key role in many aspects of culture such as African religion or belief systems,

² According to Article 27 of the UDHR as codified in Article 15 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) it states “*The States Parties to the present Covenant recognize the right of everyone: (a) To take part in cultural life; (b) To enjoy the benefits of scientific progress and its applications; (c) To benefit from the protection of the moral and material interests resulting from any scientific, literary or artistic production of which he is the author.* (United Nations General Assembly, 1966b, article 15).

rites and ceremonies, sports and games, food production, and other customs. Librarians and information workers, as important role players, have also to strive against censorship that has previously marginalised cultural information, work for intellectual freedom, and seek to provide balanced representation of ideas and resources. In addition, information and library work should never be neutral because as Durrani (2007) argues the librarian is not neutral when he or she supports the status quo and remains silent on social and political issues, arguing that when information workers remain aloof from the political and social struggles of the community, they are in fact taking a stance, which in this case alienates them from their purpose. The new visions by Mchombu, Lor and others, of what African librarianship and information work can look like include more awareness of the cultural rights of the communities and sub-communities served.

2.2 *Service to multi-cultural, multi-ethnic and multi-lingual populations*, which has become a core value of library work, not only in Africa but also globally. Multiculturalism as a concept can be contextualised firstly by **multi-cultural analysis**, which means just describing cultures without relating them to each other; secondly by **inter-cultural analysis** which means comparing and translating cultures; and thirdly by **trans-cultural analysis** which means looking for what is common beyond the singularities of each culture.

I posit that when referring to libraries, knowledge and information in any African country, multiculturalism should not be merely perceived as several cultures existing side by side but rather as several cultures intermingling to the point where a new culture exists. For example, many

of us who have received “western education” while still rooted, even if merely partially so, in African culture, actually exhibit two if not more cultures in one. Multicultural analysis alone would not do us justice because subconsciously, we exhibit multiple cultural behaviour. Intercultural analysis on the other hand has to be coached in such a way that it empowers us to act without feeling guilty. While trans-cultural analysis needs to transcend that which is common amongst our various inheritances by recognising that there are elements of uncommonality that we would still wish to keep.

Added to this complexity of culturalistic analysis is the fact that the new technologies are currently impacting the way people seek and use information, permeating even into communities/individuals that are still strongly mono-cultural and rural. The result is an information landscape that is so varied and diverse. Unschooled rural grandmothers know and use M-Pesa, while techno-savvy teenagers “follow” each other and/or their favourite celebrities via twitter. Educationists are skyping with their students and religious leaders/pastors are blogging with worshippers. There are virtual schools, virtual libraries, virtual banks, virtual friends, virtual family meetings and even virtual families. Services that incorporate all these diverse cultural perspectives are what is needed.

- 2.3 *Libraries for global citizenship.* The LIS profession is changing both evolutionarily and transformatorily (Sutton, 2001). As *natural evolution*, the LIS profession has harnessed ICTs to perform old tasks better through the automation of housekeeping tasks such as reference work, bibliographic services, cataloguing, serials, circulation and acquisition, which are performed more efficiently in an ICT environment.

Transformatorily on the other hand, there have emerged new functions and practices in the profession, arising out of an expanded, demand-driven information society, wider and/or interdisciplinary jurisdiction and closer focus on user needs (Sutton, 2001). These transformative trends represent systematic changes that substantially alter the boundaries of the profession. For example, Fourie and Bothma (2006) observe that the increased use of the World Wide Web in private, social, business lives of many people is what underpins the structures and practices of school, university, career and other use for information and communication.

African librarianship therefore needs to focus on user education (which unfortunately has been recently narrowed down to ICT training) which should empower people to make more informed decisions when seeking and using information. Two types of literacies illustrate this:

- One is what can be termed as **Social-structural literacy** which means having an understanding of how information is socially situated, produced and disseminated. Understanding includes the understanding that information has been democratized and the information user has been emancipated. The democratization of information refers to how access to information has ceased to be the preserve of the elite (remember the M-Pesa grannies). This does not in any way imply that everyone has equal/full access, but it asserts the fact that the opportunities are available depending on complexity vis-a-vis cognitive ability. Emancipation of the users on the other hand, refers to the fact that people can receive information wherever and whenever, and besides, through a variety of user-friendly, sensory variant formats that employ sound, images, animation, simulation, etc.

- Another important literacy is **Critical literacy** or the ability to evaluate critically the intellectual, human and social strengths and weaknesses, potentials and limits, benefits and costs of information. Critical literacy includes habits of thought, reading, writing, and speaking which go beneath surface meaning- first impressions- dominant myths- official pronouncements - traditional clichés - received wisdom and mere opinions, to understand the deep meaning, root causes, social context, ideology, and personal consequences of any action, event, object, process, organization, experience, text, subject matter, policy, mass media, or discourse.

These literacies are important if information access and use is to be improved. Service delivery can be significantly improved when the information seekers are information literate and have developed information seeking behaviours.

Before concluding the discussion of future libraries, it is pertinent to mention the emerging open access movement. Open access to knowledge should be seen not simply as a technological innovation but more importantly as a new means of bringing about positive changes, especially to the previously marginalised of underprivileged societies and knowledges. It is expected that open access is the way to reverse the unsustainable traditional scholarly publishing economic models, which for a long time have marginalised some communities, including Africa. However, Bowdoin (2011) observes that open access is not yet contributing significantly to the reversal of the North to South information flows in the African context nor is it yet making a significant impact on achieving the rights guaranteed in Articles 19 and 27 of the Universal

Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR)³. Some notable obstacles have been identified by Nwagwu and Ahmed (2009), such as inaccessibility to e-resources by a large number of the African population, poor e-infrastructure, little influence and low impact on internet governance and lack of supportive intellectual property laws/frameworks. Considering that institutional repositories are one of the major means by which digitisation and open access can be achieved, it is disheartening that there are to date only 58 institutional repositories in only 17 African countries. Of these, about 40% are in South Africa and most countries have only one. Perhaps a change in the education and training of librarians can better equip them to find ways of surmounting these obstacles.

Ultimately, the overriding fact is then that librarians need to use all available ICT platforms as well as traditional methods to ensure that people get access to information timeously using all possible formats that they can epistemologically access. The paradox is then that the librarian in Africa has to be global, using trendy modes of communication such as the social media and open access, while serving populations that are largely local (language, etc) and largely not literate. Reaching for the concept of the virtual library contrasts starkly with the concept of the barefoot librarian. Issues of equality and equity, development and cultural rights suggest that the librarian should be more than just a classic library science professional.

³ According to Article 19 of the UDHR and the corresponding Article 19 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) which codifies it: *Everyone shall have the right to freedom of expression; this right shall include freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds, regardless of frontiers, either orally, in writing or in print, in the form of art, or through any other media of his choice.* (United Nations General Assembly, 1966a, article 19).

3. LIS EDUCATION AND TRAINING IN AFRICA

The education and training of librarians has evolved over the years alongside the developments and change in the dimensions of library services, which in turn are linked with cultural conditions of the societies in which the libraries are located. Worldwide, LIS education is being transformed in accordance with its changing constituency - the changing LIS work place and visionary projection into the future. The first African librarians were trained abroad, mostly in the colonial masters' home countries, thus perpetuating the style and content of libraries in those countries. Suffice it to say that even though this has changed, the notion of an African librarian is still a fallacy because most of the curricula closely mirror the western ones. But at the same time, one cannot escape from the reality that our current societies are pungently influenced by western lifestyles and culture, not necessarily obliterating the African-ness, but rather building onto and intermingling with the African-ness to produce a new dynamic reality.

As early as the year 2000, Mambo observed that not only had the demand for LIS professionals in Africa increased but so also had the number of education and training opportunities on the continent (Mambo, 2000). This concurs with Ocholla's (2000) observation that the development of LIS education correlates with the growth of libraries. It is therefore imperative that the types and quality of LIS education graduates should reflect or be a reflection of the types of services provided in the libraries. However, there is often heard complaint that the education and training offered does not prepare suitable workers. Many employers decry the quality of LIS graduates often citing insufficient preparation for the work environment. Noting that "the training of librarians does not currently prepare them to respond to information needs of the 21st

century Africa”, INASP (2008:2) reiterated that there was urgent need for capacity building, network building and financial investment in LIS education. INASP (2005) had observed that Library school curricula had not kept up with the needs of the new e-environment and besides, LIS educators themselves required opportunities to upgrade their own knowledge and skills prior to designing and teaching new courses. This latter observation points to a serious problem since it implies that many LIS educators are not at the cutting edge of the practice and innovations in the field. How then will they lead the profession? It is imperative that LIS educators in Africa need take up their rightful mantle to research and stay abreast of new developments, preferably being the ones to break new ground in the continuing transformation and evolution of the profession.

Nevertheless, the current discourse and imperatives on the future of information work, renders the defining the African librarian/information worker/knowledge worker, especially for the purposes of education and training, a challenge.

- While recognizing and endeavouring to fulfil its role in enabling Africa to be visible in the information age, LIS education in Africa has to balance enthusiasm for futuristic goals with realism about the base and pace of change on the continent given the financial and infrastructural inadequacies and uncertainties on one hand and the sheer expanse and epistemological diversity of users – a factor that allied to the digital divide.
- LIS education in sub-Saharan Africa faces challenging curricula issues. Achieving a balance between traditional and modern LIS content, and between theoretical vs. practical training, have to be resolved amidst the political economies of their institutions, inadequate ICT resources, multiple languages, a largely non-literate population to be served (Zulu,

cited in Addo, 2001), and an information environment that exhibits significant disparities among its people in terms of economics, culture, geographical dispersion, politics and other challenges.

- LIS schools have to incorporate emerging disciplines such as Knowledge Management, which while positively offering Africa new benefits such as the management of indigenous knowledge (Jain, 2006), also pose the challenge of ‘stealing the show’ from mainstream or conventional library science. Meta-data handling and data curation are other examples of new emerging tracks even though the extremely fragile nature of digital data and lack of standards of practice in data curation still pose challenges. Elsewhere, these challenges have not deterred LIS educators from seizing the endless opportunities for innovation. The University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign (UIUC) now offers a course named *digital humanities* and *socio-technical data analytics* while at Simmons they offer *digital stewardship*. At the University of British Columbia, they are conducting research into *visual analytics for financial systemic risk analysis* (Goldberg, 2012) as a response towards avoiding the next financial meltdown. It is exciting but debatable whether many of the libraries in Africa need (or can accommodate) this kind of fragmentation of the LIS profession or in other words the specialist that would be a graduate from such innovative education programmes.
- Myburg (2005) observes that a new information professional is required to have additional traits such as *Personal competencies* (e.g. problem solving, critical thinking, interpersonal and communication skills, etc.) and *Learning-to-learn skills*. This suggests that the curricula need to be expanded in order to include modules or experiential learning that will develop these competencies.

- The WWW platform's imperative is that those involved in information services need to be sufficiently prepared to handle both the users of information and the attendant technologies in a manner that proactively bring the two into efficient interaction. Thus knowledge of networking, communication and retrieval technologies has become core to the profession. As Ashcroft and Watts (2005:6) observe, the changing environment in which LIS professionals work means that *“There is a need for additional training to augment the traditional skills knowledge base with a competency in ICT use.”*

With the above issues in mind, the responsible line of action toward achieving relevant education and training among others has been: to rationalise, to identify the main core competencies required and to provide continuing education.

3.1 Rationalisation. To do them justice, many LIS schools, especially in South Africa, try to revamp and rationalise their offerings regularly so as to keep up with students' and market demands. However, it is observable that in spite of curricula reviews, many of the curricula still carry heavy leaning or patterns of LIS curricula and content from developed countries and there is always a general outcry over the neglect of local context and indigenous knowledge and practices in curricula (Ocholla 2000). Even though some consultation with various stakeholders is usually undertaken by LIS schools when they re-curriculate, it is often difficult for employers (for instance) to clearly visualize how their needs can be translated into the curriculum and vice versa. Producing job-specific graduates is a “tall order” considering the diversity of employers. LIS schools, in trying to provide for everybody, often end up providing for none. I have contributed to this discourse in my joint study with Onyancha (Onyancha and Minishi-Majanja, 2008) in which we observed

that “part of the problem is the fact LIS educators are too careful not to provide too parochial an education that would render graduates restricted and unable to function outside their localities.” The result is that the “core” of LIS education and training is expressed in very generic terminology that embraces the broader information profession” (Raju 2003:232) than sufficiently contextualised to Africa. An example is the Unisa Bachelor of Information Science (BInf) degree, which was recently reviewed by external independent reviewers. Among other things, the reviewers noted that *“what is being produced is an ‘information generalist’ and whilst this may be a useful package of skills, it lacks sufficient grounding in the realities of information service provision and management...”*

Another important but missing stakeholder in the LIS education quality are the practitioners, who collectively should be represented by strong professional associations. Unfortunately, none of the professional associations in Africa have full accrediting status, leave alone capacity to assist LIS schools to map out the desirable focus of curricula. Ocholla, Dorner and Britz (2012) observe that “a distinguishing similarity among less developed countries is that professional associations do not determine or influence LIS education, either because they are not mandated to do so by government legislation (e.g. LIASA) or because they have little influence [are weak]”. As such, quality and content is often left to the academic staff, their university/institution and the national higher education QA frameworks, where they exist. Thus left to their own devices, LIS departments do their best to develop and offer relevant and marketable education and training.

3.2 The *Core competencies* of a relevant and marketable LIS education and training programme is nevertheless quite elusive as Raju (2003) observes, because of the constant/continuous evolution of the profession. There is a

continued growth of a diversity of fields that are considered as core subjects, which when pitched against the need for market-ready graduates, make the task of preparing a curriculum difficult. Raju's survey in South Africa produced a list of 25 possible subjects for the South African market alone (Raju 2003:235), a list that would get longer if the rest of the countries can be surveyed. The 10 "*core elements*" listed by IFLA (2000:2) are only the tip of the iceberg, not only because they are general enough not to be prescriptive, but also because by the same token, they are subject to interpretation (e.g. in areas of emphasis), often subject to the knowledge and expertise of the curriculum designers.

3.3 Needless to say, it therefore becomes imperative that *continuing LIS education* has to be developed as no amount of core is enough to last five years, leave alone a lifetime, in a fast-changing hi-tech world. Stoker (2000) observe that professional education can no longer be delivered in one slice because of its diversity, and that knowledge and skills acquired in full time education now have limited span of relevance and hence need to be continuously updated. Additionally, employers and employees are no longer finding it affordable to allow for full time study leave. Sadly, though, continuing professional education (CPE) for LIS workers in Sub-Saharan Africa is underdeveloped. Previous studies (e.g. Ocholla, 2000; Ocholla & Bothma, 2007) reveal that CPE programs in Africa are offered through/by local professional bodies even though a few LIS schools in South Africa sometimes offer CPE⁴ (Ocholla, 2000). Many LIS educators concur that CPE is a very important component of LIS education and training, as a way of building capacity and re-energizing LIS workers especially in the ever-changing information and knowledge environment. They nevertheless note that implementing CPE programmes is challenging. In

⁴ It is worth noting, however, that this information is not current and therefore less is known about the status of CPE in LIS schools in Africa.

planning continuous education programmes, educators often have for instance, to remember that the content of continuous education may not need to add up to complete programmes of study because, in some cases, it may just be a module that is relevant to a new development. But the most challenging factor is the staff capacity, which is said to be insufficient. The limited number of LIS staff members are often overloaded and therefore cannot support new programs such as CPE. This is a double tragedy because apart from the dearth of CPE opportunities, the underdevelopment of CPE retards the growth of the discipline. It is from workshops and SLP's of continuing education that new courses would evolve.

Other Challenges. Apart from the developmental (discipline/professional) as well as the digital divide issues, there is a third set of 'spoke in the wheel' of LIS education and training in Africa which centres on the changing Higher Education landscape, which includes the evident corporatisation of Higher Education on the one hand and issues of globalisation and massification on the other.

- In South Africa, the post-apartheid Higher Education frameworks (among other things) in attempting to mitigate the wrongs of the past and create redress and standardisation, has added to the woes of LIS education. For instance, the so called Classification of Educational Subject Matter (CESM) categories, coupled with subsidy frameworks, militate against the development of LIS education programmes that are flexible and sufficiently marketable.

It is not clear why the categorisation refers to librarianship, a term which, even though potent, does not enjoy market acceptability any more. Moreover, while this librarianship is classified at 2004, the other

components that form what would be termed “current librarianship” are scattered all over other categories. For example information science is in category 061X along with Knowledge Management (which is surprisingly not with Business Management Sciences), while Publishing and Media Studies are in categories 0505 and 0501 respectively, i.e. within Communication Sciences (South Africa, Department of Education, n.d.). At least Museum studies are in category 2004 and Archival Science is with History in category 2003 which are close by with library science. But in general, the CESM categorisation is not robust enough to facilitate the development of suitable LIS education programmes for today’s graduate and market, especially when the principles of the Higher Education Qualifications Framework (HEQF) are brought to bear (South Africa, Department of Education, 2007).

HEQF requires that a specialisation, which is included in the name of the qualification, has to account for 50% of the content of the qualification. Thus in an attempt to put together a qualification that incorporates all the essential core information work, this rule is difficult to comply with, with the result that the qualification will be denied registration by the Council of Higher Education. Perhaps the developers of the CESM categories should have consulted librarians, who have been doing classification of knowledge for centuries and have acquired deep understanding of the interrelationships among subject fields.

To exacerbate the situation are two issues: on one hand is the Department of Higher Education and Training (DoHET) stipulated regime/procedure for revising the CESM categories which requires that all relevant universities get together and collectively lobby with the DoHET for the necessary changes. Considering that universities are in competition with

one another, this is not easily accomplished. On the other hand, the SA subsidy regime as well as the corporatisation leads to the matter of the Programme Qualification Mix (PQM) simplification. Some universities, in the quest to simplify the PQM end up prescribing guidelines that further hinder the development of innovative programmes (e.g. the assigning qualification designators to certain faculties/colleges at Unisa ultimately means that the College of Human Sciences and the College of Economic and Management Sciences have to seek permission from the College of Science, Engineering and Technology before offering a qualification in Knowledge Management and Information Science).

Another aspect that adversely impacts LIS education in South Africa is the new HEQF and/or its interpretation thereof (South Africa, Department of Education, 2007). One example is the requirement that to offer a four-year professional degree requires the support of a professional association whose standards will underpin such an application. In the case of LIS, considering that LIASA has not yet received statutory mandate, any attempt to re-introduce a four year Bachelor of Information Science (BInf.) degree meets with this hurdle. The Unisa Bachelor of Information Science is caught up in such a dilemma, in spite of the recommendation by the recent review that “*the reinstatement of the four year BBibl degree...*” should be one of the best options for the improvement of the qualification.

Another problem is that universities are demanding value for money as governments reduce subsidies to these institutions and therefore LIS educators have to find innovative ways of remaining on university calendars. Traditionally, but mostly from a practical perspective, LIS courses do not attract thousands of students like, say, Business

Management, Education or English Language studies. It has therefore become necessary for economic viability purposes, for LIS departments to shift focus to more marketable specialisations or merge and/or jointly offer academic programmes with other departments. In South Africa, a number of LIS schools have drastically changed course, veering off from mainstream Library and Information Science for this reason. Dick (2012b) observes that “survival techniques include name change, shifting focus, re-invention, downscaling and migration to other faculties.” While UJ has ostensibly veered into Business Management, UP has veered to Engineering (e.g. the 2 year Masters in IT) and Media Studies while Stellenbosch has decamped to Social informatics. These three can no longer be said to be educating people to work in libraries.

Mergers with other disciplines, on the other hand, obviously result in the loss of autonomy of the discipline of LIS, even though this can, at times be seen as (or result into) strength and not a weakness. Cross-disciplinary approach with content specialists would be acknowledgement of the intersection of information work in the missions of diverse specialist areas such as health care, journalism, urban planning, development sociology, etc. At the University of Michigan for instance, Health informatics is offered jointly by LIS and Public Health departments. This has proved highly marketable thus successfully combating the forces of economic viability within the institution. Additionally, the merger with informatics shifts/expands focus from the traditional role of merely organisation and dissemination to also the creation and analysis of information thus allowing LIS to grow. At the University of Pretoria, the new Masters in Information Technology, though not jointly offered, brings together expertise from three departments, i.e. Information

Science, Computer Science and Informatics (Dick, 2012b). But ultimately the word “library” then continues to disappear.

In conclusion, it is imperative to say that training for libraries in Africa is challenging because of the variety of reasons, some of which are outlined above. In many of the countries, there is inadequate technological infrastructure to support the integration of ICTs in the curricula. This situation is further exacerbated by the diversity of the continent in terms of the information environments, economies of scale, social development levels and even literacy levels, all which often make many of the LIS graduates seem unprepared for the workplace. While it may be feasible to develop and introduce new courses in ethics, diversity and change, there could be no end to the fragmentation in order to focus on matters such as linguistic challenges, technological challenges, sensory-perception challenges, etc. Perhaps it is time to revisit the concept of harmonisation of the LIS curricular which took root in Africa in the 1980's but seems to have been discarded. Interestingly, the concept of harmonisation of the LIS curricula is only now being broached in USA. But unlike in Africa, their biggest hurdle is their former strength, i.e. each sub profession is large and well entrenched with differing values, beliefs, functions and processes. Trying to affirm that they can converge on a continuum of information access (libraries), preservation (Archives) and education (museums) and that after all, the knowledge base and artefacts among the sub disciplines intertwine, is easier said than done. It is imperative that they need each other to survive. Hopefully, the misunderstandings and rivalry will be ironed out sooner than later. The important fact is that a simplified basic curriculum at the base as a building block for the many and new specialisations, may provide the stability and robustness needed for the discipline. Then joint offerings would be a matter of choice rather than compulsory purely for survival.

4. SUGGESTIONS FOR THE WAY FORWARD

As mentioned earlier, LIS education and training goes hand in hand with library practice. Making sure not to neglect the thousands of people who are still digitally marginalized, it is important that the LIS school possess the vision, knowledge, commitment and exploratory flexibility to adapt to new changes/challenges and spearhead or apply the theory of Individual Innovativeness by allowing early adopters to provide guidance. Alongside IFLA's digitisation programme on one hand, LIS schools in Africa should collaboratively offer more online modules and qualifications. The norm should be to use a multiplicity of educational platforms and resources/systems. Tools such as Skype, Twitter, Googledocs, SecondLife, Facebook, YouTube (social media) on common platforms (Blackboard, WebCT, Sakai, Moodle, Desire2Learn) can be used concurrently with the age-old delivery methods. It is imperative that the lecturers have to become competent in handling these tools as well as command substantial knowledge of systems administration. With cloud computing as the in thing for distance education/online programmes/courses, students can be encouraged to participate actively in order to engage with other students, effectively take up new ideas/viewpoints, build new knowledge collaboratively, foster positive helpfulness and develop courteous/professional communication skills across the continent. On the other hand, the LIS educators need to collaborate nationally and continent-wide, not only in breakthrough research projects and practice that explore and nurture the meaning of African librarianship, but also in carving a more tenable place in the HEIs for the development of the discipline. In SA, this can be catalysed through the strengthening of LIASA's Research, Education and Training Interest Group (RETIG), the revival of the joint meetings/discussions between SA LIS

educators and a bid to revive and implement the recommendations that were made at the SCECSAL pre-conference workshop in Kampala in July 2004, whose main theme was the establishment of a Library and Information schools network in Eastern, Central and Southern Africa (LISNET-ECS).

Though originally a changeling, library and information work has become part of the new Africa. This changeling though still bearing strong traces of its fairy family has been transformed sufficiently and we are of age to seek our own “taken” child and marry the two. In other words, the changeling needs to be continually studied, adapted and nurtured to serve within our indigenous/hybrid knowledge systems and information histories. Because political change, social cohesion, development, human rights, economic redress, etc are key agendas in Africa, the LIS professionals need to get an education that prepares them to handle information relevantly. Then, perhaps, the paradox will be unraveled.

References

- Addo, H. 2001. Utilizing information and communication technology for education and development: issues and challenges for developing countries. *IFLA Journal*, 27 (3):143-151.
- Alemna, AA. (1996). *Issues in African librarianship*. Kaneshie, Accra: Type Co.
- Ashcroft, L & Watts, C. 2005. ICT skills for information professionals in developing countries. *IFLA Journal*, 31(1):6-12.
- Bowdoin, NA. 2011. Open access, African scholarly publishing and cultural rights: an exploratory usage and accessibility study. *Library Philosophy and Practice* (e-journal) available at <http://digitalcommons.unl.edu/libphilprac/619>.
- Dick, A. 2012a. Information histories, information geographies. *Information development* 28 (2): 91-92.
- Dick, A. 2012b. LIS education for Africa. *Information development* 28 (3): 181-182.
- Donders, Y. 2007. The legal framework of the right to take part in cultural life. In Y. Donders & V. Volodin (Eds.), *Human rights in education, science and culture: Legal developments and challenges* (pp. 231-272). Aldershot, Hampshire, UK: Ashgate.
- Durrani, S. 2007. Politics of information and knowledge in Africa: The struggle for an information inclusive society in a globalized world. In A. Mcharazo & S. Koopman (Eds.), *Librarianship as a bridge to an information and knowledge society in Africa [IFLA Publications 124]* (pp. 47-70). Munchen: K.G. Sauer.

Fourie, I & Bothma, T. 2006. Addressing the digital divide in teaching information retrieval: a theoretical view on taking students from ICT access to knowledge sharing. *The Electronic Library*, 24 (4):469-489.

Goldberg, Beverly. 2012. A snapshot of librarianship's never-ending metamorphosis> American Libraries: <http://americanlibrariesmagazine.org>.

IFLA. 2010. *IFLA/UNESCO Manifesto for Digital Libraries: Bridging the Digital Divide: making the world's cultural and scientific heritage accessible to all*. Available online at <http://www.ifla.org/publications/iflauneso-manifesto-for-digital-libraries>.

International Network for the Availability of Scientific Publications (INASP). 2008. *INASP infobrief 8*. Available www.inasp.info.

Jain, P. (2006). Empowering Africa's development using ICT in a knowledge management approach. *The Electronic Library*, 24 (1):51-67.

Lor, Peter. 1993. Africanisation of South African Libraries: a response to some recent literature. A paper presented at the 1993 *Info Africa Nova Conference* in Pretoria.

Lor, PJ & Britz, J. (2005). Knowledge production from an African perspective: International information flows and intellectual property. *International Information and Library Review*, 37, 61-76.

Mambo, HL. 2000. Africa: focus on current library and information training needs and future patterns. *Library Review*, 49 (8):387-391.

Mchombu, Kingo J. 1982. Mchombu, K.J. (1982). On the librarianship of poverty. *Libri*, 32(3), 241-250.

Mostert, BJ. 1998. Community libraries: The concept and its application - with particular reference to a South African community library system. *International Information and Library Review*, 30, 71-85.

Myburg, S. 2005. *The new information professional: how to thrive in the information age doing what you love*. Cambridge: Woodhead Publishing.

Nwagwu, W. E., & Ahmed, A. 2009. Building open access in Africa. *International Journal of Technology Management*, 45(1-2), 82-101.

Ocholla, DN. 2000. Training for library and information studies: a comparative overview of LIS education in Africa. *Education for Information* 18:33-52.

Ocholla, DN & Bothma, T. 2007. Trends, challenges and opportunities for LIS education and training in Eastern and Southern Africa. *New Library World*, 108 (1/2):55-78.

Ocholla, DN & Bothma, T. 2010. Trends, challenges and opportunities of LIS education and training in Eastern and Southern Africa.

Ocholla, DN, Dorner, D & Britz, J. 2012. Assessment and Evaluation of LIS Education: Global Commonalities and Regional Differences

Onyancha, OB & Minishi-Majanja, MK. 2008. LIS Education: Africa in *Global Library and information science: a handbook for students and educators*, edited by Ismail Abdullahi. IFLA Publication 136/137. KG Saur Munchen, pages 108-131.

Raju, J. 2003. The core in library and/or information science education and training. *Education for Information*, 21:229-242.

Ramesha, B & Babu, R. 2007. Trends, challenges and future of LIS education in India. *DESIDOC Bulletin of Information Technology*, 27(5):17-26.

Raseroka, Kay. 2006. Access to information and knowledge. In R. F. Jørgensen (Ed.), *Human Rights in the Global Information Society* (pp. 91-105). Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Rosenberg, D. 2005. *Towards the digital library: findings of an investigation to establish the current status of universities in Africa*. INASP. Available www.inasp.info.

Sithole, J. 2007. The challenges faced by African libraries and information centres in documenting and preserving indigenous knowledge. *IFLA Journal* 33(2), 117-123.

South Africa, Department of Education. 2007. The Higher Education Qualifications Framework: Higher Education Act, 1997 (Act No. 101 of 1997). *Government Gazette, Number 303535*, [and] *Government Notice No. 928, 05 October 2007*.

South Africa, Department of Education. n.d. *Classification of educational subject matter*. Available www.education.gov.za.

Stoker, D. 2000. Persistence and change: issues for LIS educators in the first decade of the twenty-first century. *Education for Information*. 18 (2/3): 115- 123.

Sturges, P & Neill, R. (1998). *The quiet struggle: Information and libraries for the people of Africa*. London: Mansell.

Sutton, SA. 2001. Trends, trend projections and crystal ball gazing. *Journal of Education for Library and Information Science*, 42 (3):241-247.